

Current Volunteers**Castolon**

Kenn & Linda Sutton—Camphosts (8th)
 Rick & Debbie Trimble—Camphost (3rd)
 Bob Douat—Visitor Center (9th)
 Ted Griffith—Visitor Center (2nd)
 Steve & Tina Ehrman—Backcountry (9th)

Chisos Basin

Ed Davis—Camphost (10th)
 Doug & Kay Combs—Camphosts (10th)
 Dave England—Visitor Center (2nd)
 John & Sue Ewan—Visitor Center (1st)

Panther Junction

Steve Blythe and Daisy Welch—V&RP River (4th)
 Joan Spalding—ScRM (2nd)
 Riley & Karen Caton—EMS (4th)
 Karren Brown—Admin (2nd)
 Joan Spalding—ScRM (2nd)
 Allen & Becky Wilson—Maintenance (1st)
 Marisol Gama—SCA ScRM

Persimmon Gap

Jim Scanlon—Visitor Center (3rd)
 Dan & Rosemary Decker—Visitor Center (1st)

Rio Grande Village

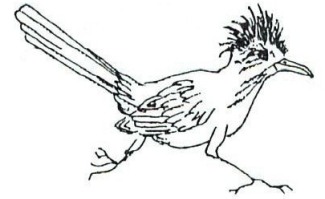
Terry Brackeen—Backcountry (4th)
 Jep Robertson & Renae Clark—Backcountry(2nd)
 David Marcum—Camphost (1st)
 Don & Karen Richardson—Camphost (1st)
 Glenda & Robert Overfelt—Visitor Center (7th)
 Jimmy Duke—Visitor Center (1st)

Resident and remote volunteers

Reine Wonite— Park Videographer (11th)
 Jim Bishop—BBNHA

* Number in () indicates years of service

River Cleanup Tackles New Ground



The rain events in November rearranged the Rio River Cleanup scheduled for November 8. The Santa Elena Takeout to Blue Creek section,



Rangers Billie Payton and Miguel Jurado maneuver the "garbage skull" downstream.

which is opened to the public, was cancelled because the water was high and swift and gaining access to shore would have been challenging for inexperienced paddlers. However, the same set of circumstances enabled our NPS Rio Rangers and three outfitters to access Santa Elena Canyon for the first time in many years for a cleanup event. Joining Michael Ryan, Billie Payton and Miguel Jurado were Betty Moore (retired from Far Flung & Desert Sports), Crystal Albright (Desert Sports), and Billy Miller (Far Flung). It was an overnight trip and Michael Ryan reports that they filled up a dumpster at the takeout.

(continued on page 2)

River Cleanup 2014 continued

The river cleanup is a joint venture with Big Bend Ranch State Park and for quite a few years, the Hancock Hill Club from Sul Ross University has participated in the cleanup in the state park. They bring their own canoes and work on Colorado Canyon. Leslie Hopper, Adelante Tejas Project Director, Rio Grande Research Center reported on their trip this year:

“Rumor has it this year was the "worst, best River Clean Up ever!!!”

The "worst" Rio Grande Clean Up because much of the trash had been flushed downstream...hence, the collecting was comparatively light. We only collected about 50% of the trash/litter compared to previous years (less than a cubic yard). Surprisingly little, really. Of the collected litter, the majority (well over 50%) was comprised of plastic water bottles, styrofoam, or recyclable items (cans & bottles). There was the odd boot, but nothing really alarming, bulky, or completely icky for a change. We speculate this is likely due to the more-frequent pulses from this year's precipitation and the ever-welcome dam releases out of the Conchos basin in Mexico.

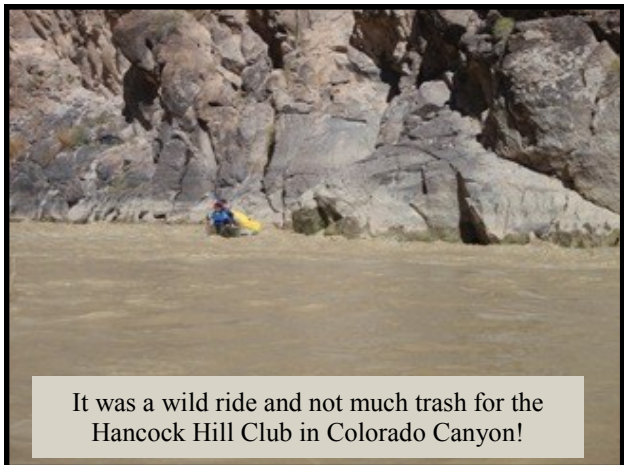
It was the "best" Rio Grande Clean Up, for the same reasons. The river banks were pretty clean up to the high-water marks. And the river was high enough that everyone got a chance to paddle a canoe this year. The current was running pretty fast, so we dumped a few canoes. Everyone seemed to have a good time in spite of the wetter moments. “



Santa Elena Canyon is a cleaner place thanks to (seated from left to right) Billie Miller, Billie Payton, Miguel Jurado, Betty Moore, and (standing) Michael Ryan



Hancock Hill Club taking off in Colorado Canyon!



It was a wild ride and not much trash for the Hancock Hill Club in Colorado Canyon!

What is a Key Exchange Hike?

For those of you who like to hike, Big Bend is full of all kinds of opportunities. One of the favorite hiking activities is a key-exchange hike. An example of a key-exchange hike is Laguna Meadows-Blue Creek. One group starts at Chisos Basin and hikes up Laguna Meadows. A second group starts out at Blue Creek and hikes toward Laguna Meadows. They meet for lunch (in a perfect world) and exchange car keys (do not forget to do this!). Then they continue on to the end of their respective trail, and drive off in the other party's car. Arrangements are made ahead of time to shuffle vehicles after the hiking is over. Steve and Tina Ehrman are very willing to arrange key exchange hikes. You can send them an email indicating your wish to participate at mountainehrman@hotmail.com or call them at 432-477-2339.

Here are some of the trails that this works on:

Dodson

Juniper Canyon/Pinnacles/Boot Canyon

Solis/Cross Canyon/Mariscal Canyon

Hot Springs Trail

Oak Springs/Window Trail

Chimneys

Dodson/Elephant Tusk

Dodson/Upper Smokey Creek/Mule Ears



Steve and Tina

Hiking Club meets on Friday, December 19! Get ready for a fun hike in the West District in December. More details will be forthcoming via email. We will be leaving Panther Junction Visitor Center back parking lot at 9 am. If you are coming from Castolon, meet at the junction of Hwy. 13 and 15 at 9:30 am. We will try to be on time! Bring a snack and water!

Taking off for Bone Spring!

The first volunteer hike of the season was led by Terry Brackeen, who took us up to Bone Spring where we looked around the old ranch and the surrounding area. It was a beautiful day weather-wise and lots of fun.



Where have you
been since your last
volunteer experience
in Big Bend?



Riley and Karen Caton—After leaving BIBE around the end of January 2014, the Catons traveled to Guerrero Negro, Baja, Mexico to go whale watching; various places in the western US to see relatives; then north up the Alaska Highway through Canada to Alaska. They crossed the Arctic Circle twice going all the way to Inuvik, Northwest Territories and Prudhoe Bay, AK. After 3-1/2 months in the far north and meeting Jane Brown in Anchorage, they began working their way back to Big Bend. They traveled over 14,700 miles over the past 10 months.

Jep Robertson—This was a big travel year for us. After leaving Big Bend I went to Tucson, AZ where my son and I competed in a 24 hour mountain bike race in which you ride in the desert and mountains from noon on one day to noon the next. Then it was off to France where I conducted an accounting seminar. After the seminar was complete Renae and I spent a week in Bordeaux and Madrid. The first half of the summer we once again volunteered at Rocky Mountain NP as campground hosts. Then, one of my bucket list trips: I hiked down to the bottom of the Grand Canyon and then did an 8 day dory trip on the Colorado River. The most fantastic trip I have ever been on. Just before returning to Big Bend we flew to Kauai to attend my elder son's wedding. It was a great time since it was the first time all five of the grandchildren were together, and what a beautiful place to be together.

Terry Brackeen—When I left Big Bend at the beginning of 2014 I visited Kickapoo Caverns State Park and Seminole Canyon State Park. I recommend both of these wonderful parks. I was in Del Rio and San Antonio where I spent time with former volunteers, Claudia and Wayne Nicholson. I visited state parks from Laredo to Brownsville before spending a few days at the South Padre Island National Seashore. I visited with family and friends on my way to north central Texas where I spent the summer.

Ted Griffith—Since last season when we left in May, we made a big circle. We went to Mount St. Helens in Washington via Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, Wyoming, Montana and Idaho. Then coming back we went through Oregon, Idaho, Utah, Wyoming, Colorado (stopped to see kids and grandkids), New Mexico, and finally back to Denton before coming back here.

Dave England—"Meandered" would describe my travels since leaving BB last April. First it was Tennessee -- to see friends -- then Kansas -- more friends. Then I "summered" as an interp volunteer at Rocky Mountain NP, where I visited more friends -- Jep Robertson and Amy Gibson from BB, who camphosted there. "Summer" at RM is a relative term. We lived at 9,000 feet, at the bottom of the slopes of the Never Summer Range, which gives you some idea of their weather. (Monsoon rains nearly every day for six weeks!) So, I looked forward to returning to BB and drying out, and we get four inches in 48 hours soon after I arrive. I get the scary feeling something is following me - and it's not a mountain lion.

Joan Spalding has been in New Hampshire; hanging out at the family property. Not a bad gig - forest and pond with lots of beavers, moose, bears, and all sorts of water fowl, in the foothills of the White Mountains. She volunteers at the local library between hikes, kayaks and lawn mowing, which is much too big.

Robert & Glenda Overfelt—No spring cruises this year as our grandkids went from three to six between April 21st - May 12th - May 22nd! We welcomed Reese Meadow Castillo - Robert Chellis Overfelt III - Emma Kay McDonald to our family! During the summer family and friends visited us at our little mountain cabin near Las Vegas, NM. In late August we continued our new tradition of the Finale Trio at the Sante Fe Opera. We are ready for our 7th season at RGV Visitor Center, renewing old friendships and making new friends here at spectacular BiBe. Our kids all plan to bring their families out to continue the traditions we started with them. Big Bend NP rules!

Jane Brown—Even though I am not a volunteer, folks are always interested where I went on my furlough. This summer I spent two weeks with my daughters in California, then 10 days with my college roommate at Yosemite and the CA coast. From there I travelled to Long Beach, Washington, and visited Terlingua escapees, playing music for two weeks. My 50th state was the last stop as I travelled to Alaska via public transport, making it to Denali and Glacier Bay, meeting Texas friends in several locations. I managed to visit with a number of volunteers along the way: the Marvins, the Catons, Linda Richardson, and Steve Blythe and Daisy Welch. A great summer!

Bob Douat - I completed visits to all 50 states by traveling to North and South Dakota. Spent some time visiting family in my home town of San Jose, CA. Went to China with fellow Big Bend VIP Ed Davis. An awesome tour. Highlights included The Great Wall and the Terracotta Warriors. China pictures here: <https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.10152665176148567.1073741853.578788566&type=1&l=aa6fe72959>

Steve Blythe and Daisy Welch spent most of the summer at Thousand Springs State Park, near Twin Falls ID. We had hoped for a spot up in the Sawtooths, but ended up working on an island in the Snake River. An enormous aquifer burbling away underground suddenly runs out of rock and comes streaming out of the black cliffs of the Snake River Canyon, forming the Thousand Springs. (Mostly consumed by hydroelectric plants and trout ranches) The rest of the country is sagebrush desert, or would be if there weren't huge irrigation pivots squirting water everywhere. Instead we found huge dairy farms, acres and acres of corn and alfalfa, and the largest yoghurt factory in the world. (Chiobani). We did maintenance and interp. on an old dairy farm from the 1920's. It was interesting, all that water kind of made us nervous, except when we were pulling trout out of it. We are glad to be back in the desert.

TRACKING MAINTENANCE VOLUNTEER TIME

All the volunteers here at Big Bend very likely perform maintenance duties from time to time. Technically, picking up trash when you hike a trail, sweeping the front porch at your visitor center, or collecting and disposing of fallen limbs in the campground all fall under the category of maintenance. You are maintaining the park, making it safer and cleaner. All maintenance work is being tracked via two software systems, FMSS and FBMS.

FMSS:

This program is used to track labor and materials to each location for several reasons. First off, it is mandatory, and secondly, to show the costs needed to maintain a particular location each year. This data helps to (1.) prioritize our Locations for funding (which buildings are getting the most use) and (2.) keep track of when maintenance is done so we can plan for when it will be needed again (such as a re-roofing or interior paint for a new resident). If we have a dozen homes due for new roofing, for example, we can create a project and request funding, and we will have the data to back up that request.

FBMS attempts to link budgetary accounts to work projects so that monies which are earmarked for residential housing are actually paying workers who are performing work on residential housing, for example.

Major work that is done for maintenance by volunteers now needs to be tracked via a special timesheet that identifies which property is being worked on and in some cases, what tools are being used. I have that timesheet and can get a copy to you if you feel that you are doing a significant amount of maintenance work which needs to be tracked. Obviously, any volunteers who are working for the Maintenance Division will be using these timesheets. Of course, now the question arises, "What is a significant amount of maintenance work?" If you spend 6 hours a week snagging trash out of bushes, picking up limbs, cleaning grills and bear boxes at RGV Campground, then the Maintenance Division would like to know about it. If you participate in a repair project as a special duty, that should be identified. This is not an overwhelming amount of data keeping...the timesheet is available digitally as well as a printer form. Your assistance with this tracking would be appreciated. If you have questions about whether something needs to be tracked, let me know and I will try to get an answer. - Jane Brown

Events in the Area

December 1 and 2 - CPR/First Aid—This one day course will be offered each day from 9 am– 4 pm at the PJ Community Room. There is room for a couple more on Tuesday . Reservations are required so email Maria Lavender at Maria_Lavender@nps.gov if you are interested.

Monday-Wednesday, December 1-3—Silent Auction portion of the Casa Grande Holiday Auction. Auction items are displayed in the PJ Community Room.

Wednesday, December 3—Casa Grande Holiday Auction, PJ Community Room. Viewing begins at 6 pm, bidding starts at 6:30 pm. Call Claudia at 477-1108 or sign up on the sheet on the bulletin board by the back door at Panther Junction if you want to make a donation.

Monday, December 15— Santa will make a stop at the Ramada (Panther Junction) **at 6 pm**. If this event doesn't get you in the Christmas spirit, nothing will!



Wednesday, December 17— Holiday Social in the PJ Community Room 6:30 pm This is the Christmas event of the season. A Casa Grande sponsored event, everyone is invited to this evening of free food and good cheer.

Thursday December 18—San Vicente School Christmas Program, San Vicente gym from 6 pm-8pm. (double check this time!) Get in the Christmas spirit by attending the Christmas program at the school and support our local school community!

Friday December 19 Hiking Club—See page 5

Christmas Eve Potluck, December 24—We will be baking a turkey and making stuffing at the Women's Dorm on Chuparosa. We need you to bring a traditional "Christmas Dinner" side dish to share. Happy hour from 5:30 to 6:30 . We will begin serving at 6:30. BYOB and iced tea will be provided. Music making will be included!

January 14—VIP Awards Dinner

Comings and Goings

Most of the volunteers are now here, however, we will have one additional new couple arriving on December 1. Alan and Becky Wilson will be volunteering with the Maintenance Division and residing at Panther Junction. They are first time volunteers at Big Bend National Park!

Pat Staggs will be leaving the park on Dec. 1 and we hope that he will be back to volunteer again with Maintenance. He has been a big help!

